

# THE AGRICULTURAL UNIONIST

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## 18th CONVENTION MEETS

The 18th National Convention of this organization is meeting in the City of New Orleans, La., on Saturday, February 6 and continues through Sunday, February 7. The sessions will begin promptly at 9 a.m. each day.

The Convention is meeting at a crucial time in the history of this organization, and much will depend on the decisions made at this most important meeting.

Since the 1951 Convention, many things have happened which seriously affect the welfare of the people whose labor produces the crops that feed and clothe America. During these two years the importation of foreign labor from Mexico and the West Indies has continued. The number of illegal aliens entering the United States from Mexico has increased to over a million persons a year. All of these legal and illegal aliens seek jobs in agriculture first and later infiltrate in other trades and industries. In the states along the U. S.-Mexican Border, it has become practically impossible for an American workers to earn a living on the land.

In Louisiana where the Convention meets, one of the most hopeful developments in American agriculture has occurred. First, working farmers of all races and nationalities organized themselves into a co-operative union. Secondly, due to the inspiration derived from this successful development among the small farmers of southern Louisiana, the sugar cane plantation workers, beaten down and depressed for generations, also organized a union and began a struggle to free themselves and their children from the new corporate plantation slavery under which they live. For 28 days they withstood the forces of corporate wealth and ended their strike only when the power of the Louisiana Courts was invoked against them. Fortified by their experiences, they are continuing the struggle for their rights as free American citizens.

The Executive Board which issues this Call welcomes all the delegates and visitors attending and invites full participation in the Convention.

## PARTIAL CONVENTION PROGRAM

### FIRST DAY (Feb. 6)

9:00 A. M. Registration of delegates  
10:00 A. M. Opening of the Convention:  
Invocation by Rev. Joseph G. Vath, Vice Chancellor,  
Archdiocese of New Orleans  
Address of Welcome by Mayor of New Orleans: Mr.  
Morrison (Invited)  
Address by Robert Soule, Secretary Central Labor  
Union of New Orleans  
Address by E. H. Williams, President Louisiana  
Federation of Labor  
Address by C. Paul Barker, Attorney for National  
Agricultural Workers Union  
Appointment of Sergeant-At-Arms  
Election of Convention Committees  
Ceremony of the Land  
Recess For Lunch

### Afternoon

2:00 P. M. Report of the Executive Council 1952-53  
Address by Emanuel Muravchik, Director, Jewish  
Labor Committee  
Meetings of Commission  
Commission No. 1—Agricultural Workers  
Commission No. 2—Small Farmers  
Meetings of Convention Committees

### SECOND DAY (Feb. 7)

Reports of Commissions  
Committee Reports  
Nominations for Office  
Election of Officers  
Adjournment

## REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE BOARD

NATIONAL AGRICULTURAL WORKERS' UNION AFL

### PART I

#### INTRODUCTION

Workers employed in agriculture are the most insecure segment of the population of the United States. Except for provisions of the sugar act under which wages of sugar cane and beet workers are tied to the price of raw sugar, there is no law putting a floor under farm wages.

The basic right of workers to form unions and bargain with their employers is usually denied agricultural workers on one pretext or another. When agricultural workers are unemployed, no unemployment insurance benefits are paid to them. Old age and survivor's insurance benefits apply only to farm workers who are regularly employed by a single employer for stated lengths of time. Agricultural workers who are injured on the job are excluded by most of the states from any benefits under state workmen's compensation laws. From 50 to 90 per cent of the nation's farm workers are illiterate and cannot hope even to educate their children under existing conditions.

The exclusion of farm workers from nearly all social legislation adopted in the past 20 years, forces over 2 million workers and their families to live under inhuman conditions which usually are believed to prevail in only the backward and undeveloped agricultural countries of the world. The only difference is that in times of prosperity in the United States, some of the nation's farm workers can find employment in other industries. If this escape hatch did not exist, there would have been an explosion at the bottom of the agricultural ladder before now.

The nation's agricultural workers were the first to feel the effect of an economic downward trend. For the past several years we have known that another "depression" was in the making. While the cost of living soared, farm wages were reduced and work has grown harder to find both in industry and in agriculture. Also, a man from the farm is the last to be hired, and the first to be fired in industrial employment. If several million workers are laid off in industry during the next two years, as soon as the unemployment insurance benefits are exhausted, hundreds of thousands of unemployed ex-farm workers may start a back to the land movement, such as occurred early in 1930.

#### Sugar Cane Workers

A shocking example which proved the plight of the nation's 2 million or more agricultural workers was forcefully brought to the attention of the public in October, 1953 by the sugar cane workers in Louisiana.

Here, 90 large scale sugar corporations are engaged in the production and processing of sugar cane. There are nearly 4,000 farms in Louisiana producing an acre or more of sugar cane, but the 90 large plantations ranging from 1,000 acres of land upward, produce over 50 per cent of the sugar cane grown in the state and employ nearly all of the 15,000 workers required by the industry. Many of these larger plantations are owned by corporations which also operate grinding mills and refineries. The mills also grind the cane for the "shirt-tail farmers," who have as little control over the products of their labor as do the workers employed directly on the plantations operated by the sugar corporations.

The most profitable part of the sugar cane crop harvested by the corporation farmers is the subsidy payments made by the U. S. Department of Agriculture under the Sugar Control Act. One of the smaller Louisiana sugar cane corporations in 1952 received \$200 an acre in subsidy payments from the U. S. Treasury. In return for this subsidy, the sugar cane planters are required to pay wage rates determined by the Secretary of Agriculture each year as being fair and reasonable. However, there are "jokers" in the sugar control law. These wage rates paid the workers are tied directly to the market price of raw sugar. Also, the annual wage hearings conducted by the Department of Agriculture are based on evidence submitted by the spokesman for the sugar cane corporations. The chief spokesman for the sugar cane corporations is the American Sugar Cane League which claims to represent 7,000 members, nearly twice as many members as there are farmers producing one or more acres of sugar cane in Louisiana. The Sugar Cane League, in reality represents only the interests of the large corporations.

The basic wage rates determined by the Secretary of Agriculture to be paid the sugar cane plantation workers during the 1953-1954 season range from a low of \$3.85 to \$4.90 for a 9 hour day. Highly

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skilled workers who operate heavy farm equipment such as tractors, cane cutting machines, and loading equipment are normally paid the \$4.90 a day base rate. Independent surveys show that sugar cane plantation workers employed the year round, earn from \$700 to \$1,200 a year with which to support their large families. Over half of the 15,000 workers normally employed in the industry are plantation workers who live on the plantations or in corporation owned towns. Their homes belong to the corporations and they buy their food and clothing on credit at the plantation commissary. If they need medical attention, they sometimes have the services of a corporation doctor. Usually the workers have no idea of how much cash, if any, they will get on pay day. Often they do not know which day of the week or month they are to be paid. Conditions of life and work for the plantation workers are much the same as those which prevailed in the days of chattel slavery.

Until the sugar cane plantation workers formed their union in November, 1952, only one other serious effort had been made to organize them and improve the way of life on the plantations. In 1879 the sugar cane workers recently freed from slavery revolted, and for several days were on strike for higher wages. This strike was led by the Knights of Labor, a national organization that preceded the American Federation of Labor. The strike of 75 years ago was broken by the governor of Louisiana, who ordered the state militia to put down the revolt of the ex-slaves. The strike leaders were jailed on charges of trespassing on the property of the sugar cane planters.

In 1953 nearly 2,000 of the plantation workers again formed a union and sought recognition of their organization by their employers. Several large corporations operating multiple plantation units throughout the sugar cane area were requested by the Union to meet with representatives of their employees to discuss wages, working and living conditions. The employers refused to recognize the existence of the Union and claimed that agricultural workers were forbidden by state and federal law to form unions or act in concert. The Union then called upon the State Labor Commissioner to mediate the dispute, and offered to open its membership records to the Commissioner or submit to an election to determine whether or not it represented the workers. The corporation officials also refused to meet with the representatives of the Louisiana Labor Commissioner. A strike ballot taken by the sugar workers' local union resulted in a vote of 1,804 to 8 to authorize the calling of a strike. Before the strike vote was announced the National Union intervened and appealed directly to the corporations seeking to avoid an open conflict. This request for a meeting was also refused. On October 12, over 1,200 workers employed mainly on plantations owned by four major sugar cane corporations stayed away from their jobs in the fields. The workers assembled in mass meetings which were held in continuous session throughout the working hours each day.

There is evidence that the employers were prepared to invoke the power of the state courts to stop the strike. Eviction notices to be served on the workers to vacate corporation owned houses were in hand. Duplicated copies of court orders ready for signature by parish judges enjoining the Union, its officers and members from all strike activity had been prepared by corporation attorneys. However, the corporation lawyers had not discovered legal techniques for breaking up continuous Union meetings, nor had the corporation officials and lawyers counted on the Union having the legal services of C. Paul Barker and his associates in the firm of Dodd, Hirsch and Barker, who by working on a 24 hour a day schedule, stopped the legal evictions of strikers from their plantation homes. However, as soon as the picketing of the plantations and grinding mills was started, one or more injunctions were issued in every parish affected by the strike. These injunctions prohibited all picketing, denied officers, members, and persons associated with the Union, their constitutional right of free speech by prohibiting anyone from inducing workers to refuse to work or to refrain from returning to work on the plantations. The Union was also forbidden to distribute printed matter or otherwise interfere with the corporation's business. Since these injunctions carried the full force of the law even though they clearly violated basic principles of the Constitution of the United States, the Union obeyed the injunctions and made attempts to appeal to higher courts to set aside these vicious denials of civil liberties. Finding that the legal procedure provided delays of weeks and months in securing justice, the Union representatives advised the individual workers who had been on strike for 28 days to return to work if they wished to do so, pending the restoration of their legal rights by higher courts. After receiving assurances that the Union would continue the battle for recognition, the majority of the members elected to return to work on the plantations. Some of the workers refused to go back to work, and others were blacklisted by their employers for taking part in the strike. Nearly all of these workers are now employed on other jobs, although technically they are still on strike.

Even though the strike was stopped by the Louisiana court injunctions, the struggle for recognition of the rights of sugar cane plantation workers to form a union and act together for the purpose of self improvement has not ended. The Union is continuing its organizing campaign in Louisiana and this campaign will not cease

until the overwhelming majority of workers employed in the sugar cane industry are organized, and the corporations recognize the Union as the bargaining agent for their employees.

As was clearly stated in a public statement made by New Orleans Archdiocesan Unit of the Catholic Committee of the South on October 16, the issue in this strike "is the basic moral right of any workers, industrial or agricultural, to organize."

The Executive Board of the National Agricultural Workers Union wishes to express its deep appreciation to the many religious and civic leaders of New Orleans and in the rural communities which were affected directly by the strike, for their wholehearted support of the right of the sugar cane workers to form a union and to act in concert. It has been a most unusual experience for officers of this Union to receive such a helping hand in their work of improving the standards of living of the workers in the lowest economic strata of human society. We make a pledge to these good people that the National Agricultural Workers Union will continue to conduct its affairs so as to merit the confidence they have shown in the organization.

We also wish to express our sincere appreciation to our fellow trade unionists both in the American Federation of Labor and the C.I.O., and to our fellow workers in other countries who gave both financial and moral support to the striking sugar cane plantation workers.

### Importation of Foreign Workers

The importation of foreign workers for exploitation in large scale agriculture has continued to expand during the past two years. In 1953, Congress extended for another two years the law under which officials of the U. S. Government are authorized to enter into agreements with Mexico for the legal importation of workers to be employed in agriculture. About 200,000 contract workers have been imported from Mexico each year and are employed in nearly every agricultural area of the United States. Several thousand workers are also brought in from the British West Indies each year. They are employed mainly in the eastern half of the country.

The importation of these contract workers continues to "adversely affect" the wages and working conditions of American citizens employed in agriculture and related industries. The number of illegal aliens from Mexico entering the United States has increased each year. The U. S. Immigration Service states that in 1953, over a million wetbacks were apprehended and deported. While many of these were repeaters (those who are deported back across the border more than one time), there are estimates that at least a million more entered the United States without being caught by U. S. authorities.

Early in 1953 the new Republican Administration became quite concerned about the "wetback" situation and U. S. Attorney General Herbert Brownell made a personal survey of the situation. He then issued newspaper statements as to how the Eisenhower Administration proposed to solve the wetback menace. He discussed hiring more border patrolmen, enacting new legislation and providing for better enforcement of present laws. Brownell even hinted that the government might use the army to turn back the wetback tide.

### Brownell's Wetback Plan

The Administration strongly objected to demands of the Mexican government for payment of better wages and for improved working conditions for legally imported contract workers and on January 15, broke off negotiations with Mexico for a new agreement or an extension of the old one. The "Brownell Wetback Plan" has now been publicly revealed—a plan to legalize the entry of all the Mexican Nationals the corporation farmers want to import, by instituting a system of recruiting Mexicans at the border just before they enter the United States. This is essentially the same program demanded since 1942 by the corporation farmers who instead of border recruiting, called it "border crossing," with each Mexican worker who applies being given a permit card legally entitling him to remain in the country as long as necessary, with the right to work for whatever wage and under any conditions offered by the farm operators. Officials of the U. S. Department of Labor maintain that they will continue to assist the corporation farmers and the Mexican workers in negotiating contracts defining terms of employment. While the Mexican government officials usually failed to enforce the terms of the contracts of their nationals while they were employed in the United States, their government did insist upon minimum standards of employment being included in all agreements and individual work contracts. At least Mexico did a better job of protecting the contract nationals than U. S. authorities have ever done in protecting the standards of American citizens employed in agriculture.

### Farm Labor in the U. S. A.

Early in 1952 hearings were held by the U. S. Senate on recommendations made by the "President's Commission on Migratory Labor" which was appointed by Mr. Truman at the request of the National Agricultural Workers' Union. During the hearings by the

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Senate Committee a delegation of migratory farm workers appeared on behalf of the Union. The Committee recommended the adoption of a law setting up a permanent committee on migratory labor, which secured wide support but it was not possible to secure even a hearing in the House of Representatives and the measure died, without further consideration.

### Farm Labor in Washington

After much criticism had been directed at the Department of Labor for having a "Special Committee on Farm Labor," composed solely of farm employers, the Secretary finally appointed an 18 man group known as "Labor's Advisory Committee on Farm Labor," composed of representatives of the A. F. of L. and C.I.O. Two meetings of the full committee were held. Sub-committees were called in several times and the members thereof were "advised" by officials of the Labor Department as to policies and programs already worked out with assistance of the corporation farmers. However, the basic needs of American agricultural workers were discussed and ideas were exchanged in such meetings which led to an increased interest in the farm labor problem by both A. F. of L. and C.I.O. The President of the National Agricultural Workers Union has been a member of this official committee on farm labor since its formation, and has also served several years as a member of the Federal Advisory Council of the Bureau of Employment Security. The Federal Advisory Council was created by Congress and is composed of representatives of employers, workers and public representatives. The Advisory Council has also performed some worthwhile services in the farm labor situation.

### International Trade Union Co-operation

One of the most significant developments in the farm labor situation occurred December 14 and 16, when an international trade union Conference was held in Mexico City under the auspices of an Inter American Organization of Workers, ICFTU, with delegations representing the free trade unions of Mexico and the United States in attendance. The National President and Vice-President Galarza were present as members of a large A. F. of L. delegation. The C.I.O. and the United Mine Workers also sent delegations. The conference worked out a trade union program for improving the wages and working conditions of workers employed on U. S. farms, whether they are native Americans or imported Mexican Nationals here legally under contract. Recommendations were also made for action by both the Mexican and U. S. Governments to control the wetbacks. The outstanding accomplishment of the conference was an agreement reached between the U. S. and Mexican trade unions that Mexican Nationals entering the United States under contract to work on farms, would be organized in Mexico and transferred to the National Agricultural Workers Union while employed in the U. S. A. The details of this joint organizing program remain to be worked out between the unions.

The conference also set up a joint committee composed of 8 members from Mexico and 8 from the United States to work together on future programs. The National Union's President has been designated by President Meany of the A. F. of L. as one of the members representing the American Federation of Labor.

### ILO Meeting Cuba

In March, 1953 the President of the National Agricultural Workers Union was appointed as the workers' delegate from the United States to attend an international conference on Plantation Work in Havana, Cuba held by the International Labor Organization. The ILO is a part of the United Nations, and is concerned with setting standards, and conditions for workers in all countries of the world. Prior to the convening of the ILO Conference on Plantation Work, there was a meeting of trade unions from all areas of the world which produce sugar cane, and another of unions of plantation workers throughout the world.

The meeting in Havana also brought to the United States for the first time the General Secretary of the International Land Workers Federation, with which the National Agricultural Workers Union is affiliated. This is the agricultural workers division of the International Federation of Free Trade Unions of which the A. F. of L. and C.I.O. are a part. From Secretary de Ruijter, much was learned about the organization of agricultural workers in Europe, where wages and working conditions, due to organization in trade unions, are much further advanced than in the United States.

Contracts were also made in Havana with the Cuban Sugar Workers Federation, which is one of the strongest organizations of agricultural, field, and factory workers in the world. When the sugar cane strike in Louisiana occurred, the Cuban Sugar Workers, at the request of our National Union, placed an embargo on all raw sugar being shipped to Louisiana.

### Area For Organization of Agricultural Workers

As is indicated in this report, the Executive Board recommends that officers of the Union be instructed to continue organization of agricultural workers and others employed in the sugar cane industry.

Since the importation of Mexican contract Nationals and the influx of hundreds of thousands of wetbacks continues to be most serious, especially in California where the Union has concentrated much of its efforts during the past seven years, it is recommended that the organizing staff in that area be expanded as soon as possible. It is also recommended that the Vice-President in charge of the western office co-operate in working out with the appropriate Mexican trade union, a joint organizing program among workers who are legally entering the United States as contract workers in agriculture, to the end that both American citizens and Mexican Nationals may be represented by the National Agricultural Workers Union in their relations with employers, as well as government officials.

## PART II

### ORGANIZATION OF WORKING FARMERS

As has been demonstrated, agricultural wage workers employed on large scale corporation farms are at the bottom of the agricultural ladder. On the lowest rung of this ladder are the nation's small farmers. This was recognized by the President of the United States in his message to Congress concerning the farm program early in January. President Eisenhower told Congress, "The chief beneficiaries of our price support program have been the 2 million larger highly mechanized farm units which produce about 85 per cent of our agricultural products. The individual production of the remaining farms numbering about 3.5 million is so small that the farmer derives little benefit from price supports." The President could have said too, with equal truth, that there are also 125,000 large scale corporation farmers who in combination with processor and distributor corporations have secured absolute control over the marketing of all farm products. The smaller farmers without an organization are helpless.

During past years the number of these small farmers who gave up and left the farm permanently, has increased each year. Over a million lost out between 1940 and 1950. There would have been more if many of these little farmers had not secured part-time work in industry and service trades. As industrial employment falls, these small farmers who have been part-time workers are losing their jobs and seeking to earn all of their living on the land. Since they become accustomed to higher standards of living while working in trades and industries organized by unions of both A. F. of L. and C.I.O., they are turning in increasing numbers to the National Agricultural Workers Union for assistance.

### The Strawberry Farmers of Louisiana

For many years small farmers in Southeastern Louisiana have been engaged in the production of strawberries and vegetable crops for the market. At one time there were nearly 10,000 such farmers in that area growing strawberries each year. There are now about 3,000. These people are of many races, nationalities and religious beliefs and tend to divide along these lines in rural communities, producing their crops to be sold on the open market to a few buyers who represent large chain stores and commission houses in the principal cities of the country where the products were distributed to the consumer. This situation was made to order for robbing the farmer of the products of his labor. There were periodic revolts among these small farmers over the years. A number of organizations were built but failed because of the lack of a program for centralized marketing and for solving the problems created by the divisions among the farmers along religious, racial and nationality lines.

In 1951 another revolt occurred during the strawberry marketing season. Without any organization, the farmers stopped strawberries from going to the market. This was not very successful but it created a desire on the part of various groups for a solid and substantial organization. Among the leading citizens were a number of men who were then or who had been employed part-time on industrial jobs. They suggested a labor union as the solution, and called upon the Louisiana Federation of Labor for assistance. A. F. of L. organizers were sent in and a co-operative union composed of over 90 per cent of the farmers was built during 1951 and 1952. It became affiliated with the National Agricultural Workers Union, under the name "Louisiana Fruit and Vegetable Producers Union Local 312." A one-desk selling agent was employed by the local union to market all of the members' products. Agreements and contracts were entered into with handlers and processors, and were strictly enforced by normal trade union methods used by other workers in their dealings with employers. A most successful opera-

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tion came into being. The Local Union acting as a co-operative marketing agency for its members, secured the best prices obtainable and in addition, returned to its members rebates amounting to thousands of dollars the first year. There was considerable opposition from chain stores and commission agents who had long been accustomed to reaping large profits at the expense of the strawberry and vegetable grower. Complaints were made to authorities in Washington by those who could no longer defraud the farmer of the products of his labor. These complaints stated that the Union was a monopoly of big businessmen engaged in restricting production. Preliminary investigations were made but no action was taken.

However, an election was held and a new administration came into power in Washington. Tom Dewey who could not be elected President was paid off by the Republican Party with the appointment of one of his underlings, Herbert Brownell, as U. S. Attorney General. Brownell's first act in office was to order dismissal of the suits against the Standard Oil Co. and others for conspiracy to control the oil production of the world which has resulted in price increases for oil and gasoline consumers. Brownell's next act was to send a special assistant down to New Orleans and have Local 312, and its officers and a Vice-President of the National Union indicted on charges of conspiracy to violate the Anti-Trust laws. The big businessmen's new administration also returned indictments throughout the country against similar organizations of people attempting to improve their standards of living. The case of the strawberry farmers attracted nation wide attention. This persecution of the poor and needy was denounced in Congress.

As this report is being prepared, attorneys representing the Union are seeking to settle the strawberry farmers' case without the necessity of a long and costly trial. If no satisfactory terms can be reached, the issue will be resolved in the courts and we shall see whether there is one law for the rich and powerful, and another for the poor and needy.

Having made their peace with the law, the Louisiana Fruit and Vegetable Producers Co-operative Union Local 312 has been reorganized and will continue its operation in practically the same manner as it has in the past two years, with all of the members marketing their products through a single selling agency.

### Dairy Farmers

One of the groups of smaller farmers hit the hardest by control of the market by corporate interests is the dairy farmers. 60 per cent of the dairy products produced in the United States is processed and distributed by three large dairy products corporations. The dairy trust, with milk plants in nearly every rural community of the nation and consumer outlets in all of the principal cities, is engaged in the business of robbing the producer of the products of his labor, by buying at low prices and fleecing the consumer by selling at high prices. The dairy farmer receives 10 or 11 cents for a quart of whole milk. The dairy trust skims the butter fat off the milk and sells it to the government at a high price. The consumer then pays about 25c a quart for the skimmed milk. The price of butter is so high that few can buy it, and it goes to ruin in government storage warehouses.

Throughout the nation there are model dairy farms with huge herds of contented cows, expensive barns and equipment valued at thousands of dollars. Some of these dairy show places are owned outright by the dairy trust, and others by alleged independent corporations and wealthy individuals. However, the bulk of dairy products is produced on little farms which are owned and operated by family farmers. Often the wife and children do most of the work, while the husband holds down a job in a nearby industry, doing the heavy work the rest of the family cannot do before or after his work in town is ended. The little dairy farmer cannot afford to hire labor. The only way he can get a vacation is to go out of business.

In 1949 the first of these dairy farmers applied to our National Union for assistance in Louisiana. An organizer was assigned to help them. A \$100,000 milk plant was built with the help of leading citizens of the parishes it served. Progress was made and the federal milk marketing order in New Orleans setting a minimum price for the products of the dairy farmers' labor remains one of the highest in the nation.

The following year 1,500 dairy farmers in the Duluth-Superior Milk Shed also formed a union, secured increased prices under the federal milk marketing order and entered into agreements with a number of distributors for premium prices above those set in the federal order. The dairymen near Duluth and Superior also enlarged a co-operative plant they owned, while a group on the Minnesota Iron Range organized an adjoining area and entered into agreements with the distributors of their products. These dairy farmers are making fine trade unionists and participate fully in the labor movement of their cities and states.

Other groups of dairy farmers have been organized in Pennsylvania, New York, New Jersey and West Virginia, with equal success.

### A Department of Co-operative Unions

After several years of experience, the National Agricultural Workers' Union has some knowledge not only of the needs of the 3½ million small farmers to whom President Eisenhower referred in his message to Congress, but has also developed a formula for organizing and serving the needs of these people who are on the bottom rung of the agricultural ladder.

Many years ago the Congress of the United States recognized the fact that farmers had special problems that were different from those of independent businessmen and that special laws were needed to permit them to form democratic organizations for the purpose of protecting their interests. Therefore, the Capper-Volstead Act was adopted which encouraged farmers to organize into associations for the purpose of marketing the products of their labor. Model laws were also adopted in each state to carry out the purpose of the Capper-Volstead Act. However, these measures were prepared by lawyers and were not modelled along the lines of democratic organizations which both workers and farmers in the United States have always understood and belong to, but such organizations were set up in accordance with practices of business corporations.

The intent of the Capper-Volstead Act and the state laws providing for incorporation of associations of farmers for the purpose of co-operative marketing of agricultural products is good. Under these laws and in conformity with procedures outlined, farmers may organize into co-operative unions, and be exempt from prosecution on charges of price fixing as well as exempt from payment of income tax. However, the model forms and procedures set out in these laws lend themselves to control by one person or a small clique of individuals. Purchasers and distributors of agricultural products, especially those corporations comprising the "milk trust," soon recognized the value of organizing associations of farmers and proceeded to sponsor organizations of producers from whom they purchased raw materials for processing. They subverted the purposes of the law and thus gained control over the farmers' organizations. This rape of the farmers was usually accomplished with the aid of one or more of the major farm organizations, whose leadership is identical with that of the National Association of Manufacturers.

Attorneys for the National Agricultural Workers Union have made a study of these laws, largely as a result of the prosecution of the strawberry farmers in Louisiana, and have found that it is possible under the Capper-Volstead Act and various state laws, for democratic organizations to be formed by small farmers and controlled by them. Model by-laws for operation of co-operative unions formed by farmers, incorporated by the state and chartered by the National Agricultural Workers Union, will meet the need. Restrictions will be placed on officers of the co-operative union, making them directly responsible to the membership. Provisions will require frequent and regular membership meetings and marketing agreements between the co-operative union and the individual farmer.

The Executive Board recommends the adoption of the proposed amendment to the constitution of the National Union providing for the establishment by incoming officers of a "Department of Co-operative Unions," which will be authorized to assist in organizing small farmers and to provide legal technical aid and educational services for such affiliates which are chartered by the Union.

It is further recommended that the Union seek necessary changes in legislation at both the state and national level to provide that whatever the majority of farmers in an area or crop voluntarily join together for the purpose of marketing their products and in an election conducted under official auspices vote to sell the products of their labor co-operatively, that all farmers in the area be required to market their products through the agency provided for marketing.

### ON THE IRON RANGE

By  
MILO PETERSON  
Secretary, Dairy Farmers Local 297

The Minnesota Iron Range Dairy Farmers Local 297, at a meeting held September 20, 1953 voted to donate \$100 to Brother Edward Lehtinen whose barn and hay mow burned to the ground the first day in September.

According to report of milk prices issued by Dairy Record of Minnesota in August, 1953 the Iron Range in northern Minnesota is the only place in the United States where the price of milk has not changed in the past year. Local 297 is due the credit for keeping the prices up when they were falling everywhere else in the country. This shows that it pays to organize.

Local 297 donated \$25 to Mrs. John Huttunen when Brother Huttunen died in November 1953. Mr. Huttunen was past 60 years of age when he joined the Union two years ago, and was not covered by the Union's insurance policy for that reason.

Local 297 has entered into an agreement with Bridgeman Russel Company and the Twin Pines Dairy Co-op of Virginia, Minn., whereby all members shipping milk to these firms have their Union dues checked off each month.